

# A Stylistic Analysis of Ambanasom's 'Plastic Invasion'

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## ABSTRACT

Plastic pollution is a crucial global confrontation owing to the prevalent, and unmanageable threat it presents to humans and the environmental pressure it causes. Stylistic analysis explores numerous features of the style of a text. This article analyzes Ambanasom's 'Plastic Invasion' from a stylistic perspective, paying particular attention to cohesive devices. The study examines what the author achieves by using these devices. The data for this study constitutes examples of cohesive devices drawn from Ambanasom's 'Plastic Invasion'. The analysis is done under lexical, grammatical and phonological cohesion. Stylistic analysis is used to explore themes through different cohesive devices and vocabulary items to understand the poem. The poem 'Plastic Invasion' present how Ambanasom uses language to reflect the savagery of this environmental pollutant "plastic", by the patterns of cohesion and foregrounding in the poem. It underscores the difference between ordinary everyday languages compared to the literary language employed in poetic text. This portrays style variation and its impact on the reader. Meanwhile, the analysis of the poem also reveals how Ambanasom's choices in different parts of the poem correspond with one another, establishing a network of successive relation. Thus, this study enhances the reader's understanding of the different cohesive devices used in the poem.

**Keywords:** Style, Stylistics, Cohesion, Foregrounding, Plastic invasion.

## INTRODUCTION

Style is a Latin word 'stylus', which means "anything to write with". However, what is meant by style has different applications to different people, as it is very difficult to arrive at a full description of style that is acceptable to all scholars. As such there are many definitions of the word style as there are scholars, yet no consensus is reached among them on what style is. Style has different meanings for different people. Carter & Simpson, (1989, p 14) believes that style generally depends on linguistic levels. Due to these levels every text and writing is different from the other, hence every genre is different. Haynes (1989, p.3) is of the view that the study of style is the study of distinctions: looking at what was said against what might have been said. Style refers as the manner of expression which is different in various contexts. Style, being a versatile field, is defined depending on one's field of study. Haynes (1989) states that, style as a study of individuality. It is the study of linguistics which shows how the writer's way of thinking is portrayed in literary works. According to Lawal (2004), style is a type of different linguistic expression which covers different features of a language. Rameez A. H, Ali R, A, Mahmood (2014), note that, style varies from text to text depending on various factors like the form, meanings, grammar and structure. Leech & Short (2007 p. 9) define style as "the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on. Style depicts the writer's personality. The distinctive style of Shadrack Ambanasom is observed in his writings, as he uses simple unpretentious narrative language to present his idea through different plastic objects.

Rameez A. H, Ali R, A, Mahmood (2014), note that, style varies from text to text depending on various factors like the form, meanings, grammar and structure It refers to use of words, sentence structures and

speaking style. Broadly, style is related to the personality of the person. It reflects the thoughts of person's mind. It describes the way of person's speaking and writing. Style is involved in both, spoken and written, literary and nonliterary types of language but it is particularly associated with written form of the literary texts. It is the way of the writer to convey the message to the readers. It is upon the writer that how he makes his text understandable that the meanings are conveyed. Style or stylistic variations may also be analyzed in linguistic terms for example sentence types, phonological devices, lexical varieties, morphological varieties, rhetorical terms, semantic terms, and even semiotic terms and utterance. Style is any specific procedure by which we do something, a manner or a way of doing something is a style. Generally speaking, the way everything appears is style. The personality of any person depicts some particular style. The thoughts of a person are also reflected in his style. It describes the way a person speaks, walks, talks or writes, (Batool Z, Kiran S, & Mehmood Azhar A, 2016).

The term stylistics on its part is a contested one. There are a number of definitions of stylistics given by different scholars in the field of linguistics. Widdowson (1975, p.3) defines stylistics as the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation. He said that which differs stylistics from literary criticism and linguistics is its linking technique. He also suggests that stylistics is in between linguistics and literary criticism and its function is to link between the two. So, generally, it deals with both literary and linguistic factors. Stylistics as defined by Chapman (1973), is the linguistic study of different styles. According to him, stylistics is concerned with the analysis of the reason for choosing a given style in a language. It examines how language is used grammatically, morphologically, phonologically, semantically and as discourse.

Cohesion is an essential element for the construction of a text. Leech (1970, p. 120), argues that cohesion is the way in which independent choices in different points of a text correspond with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relation. Thus, cohesion is a semantic relation, which functions as a link between two or more combinations called "the presupposed and the presupposing". A literary text is a piece of the language, and language use may facilitate our understanding of any literary piece and vice versa. Cohesion in English, in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) view, is defined as what occurs when the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by resource to it. Simpson (2004, p.13) opines that, "literary effect" is dependent upon style as one thing to demonstrate just how this is quite another.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Studies have been carried out on stylistic analysis of Ambanasom's poems. Meanwhile, nothing has been done on the style of 'Plastic Invasion.' Nevertheless, this study sets out to examine the style of Ambanasom in his poem 'Plastic Invasion'.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study is an analysis of stylistic devices in Ambanasom's poem, 'Plastic Invasion'. The study also examines what the author achieves by using these devices.

### **Scope of the Study**

This is entirely a stylistic study. It is limited to the analysis of cohesive devices used in the poem. 'The poem 'Plastic Invasion' is analyzed in terms of its cohesive properties. The analysis is conducted through the following levels: lexico-syntactic patterns and choices, phonology, graphology and morphology.

The analysis is done using the stylistic properties of cohesion in each of the above mentioned levels of analysis in order to provide a guide for future research in related fields.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

The section that follows reviews what other scholars have examined in the area of stylistics, and cohesive devices.

### Style and Stylistics

Style is a way in which language is being used in a given context for a given purpose. Birch (1989, p. 10) argues that both language and style cannot move beyond a limit on the supremacy of words. He strongly believes that these words contain specific meanings which differs it from the ordinary language. Carter & Simpson, (1989, p 14) believes that style generally depends on linguistic levels. Due to these levels every text and writing is different from the other, hence every genre is different. Style is ‘the linguistic characteristics of a particular text. It depicts the writer’s personality. On her part, Miššikova Gabriela, (2003), defines stylistics as a field of study where the method of selecting and implementing linguistic, extra linguistic or expressive means and devices in the process of communication are studied.

Stylistics has its root in the formalistic school of literary criticism emerged in Russia early in the twentieth century. Formalism “erected on the foundations laid by the SYMBOLIST movement a critical method that posited the autonomy of the work of art and the discontinuity of the language of literature from other kinds of language”(Child and Fowler,2006, p. 93).Crystal (2008, p. 195) strictly links the term formalism or to be exact formalist, to stylistics “A term applied in stylistics to any approach which regards a text as a formal object of study, with an internal structure that can be objectively and formally identified.”

Language users will first encounter a text by its surface features, that is., a configuration of words having some propositional development (Widdowson, 1978), or continuity. Leech (1970, p. 120), explains that, cohesion is the way in which independent choices in different point of a text correspond with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relation. Therefore, cohesion is a semantic relation, which functions as a tie between two and more compounds, called “the presupposed and the presupposing”. He distinguishes two major headings of cohesive relation. 1. Grammatical cohesion; which subsumes reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and 2. Lexical cohesion which subsumes lexical relation and collocation.

### Stylistics Analysis

According to Niazi and Guatam (2007), the main aim of stylistic analysis is to provide as detailed description as possible of the work in question. All writers, and all texts, have their individual qualities. Short (1996) believes that the priority in analyzing a text stylistically in current times “has been to try to understand the relationship between the literary text, on one hand, and how we understand it, and affected by it, on the other.

### Stylistic Levels of Analysis

According to Leech and Short (2007, p.119), there are three levels of organization which together form the expression plan of language. These levels are: SEMANTICS, SYNTAX and PHONOLOGY. While the semantic level is the level of meaning, syntax and phonology “constitute what is often referred to as the “double articulation” of linguistic form: phonology being the “sound pattern” of the language(phonemes, stresses, rhythm, intonation, etc).Lodge (2009, p.8) views phonology as the study of linguistic systems, specifically the way in which sound represents, differences of meaning in a language. Alabi, V. (2007) believes that phonology describes the ways in which speech sounds are organized in English into a system. Phonology basically deals with the sound patterns, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence. Phonological Devices are: rhyme elements, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

Syntax refers to Sentence construction': how words group together to make phrases and sentences. Thus, syntax is used in the construction of the phrase and sentence as stylistics is used in literary style. Roughly speaking, syntax is the abstract grammatical and lexical form of language. Leech and Short, added a fourth level to suit the written medium of literature. This is the level of GRAPHOLOGY.

Crystal and Davy (1969, p.18), refer to graphology as the analogous study of a languages writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting or topography. These are the formalized rules of writing. Ofuya, (2007, p.170) adds that "a graphological discussion of style among other features entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, ellipses periods, hyphens, contracted forms, special structures, the full stop, the colon, the comma, the semicolon, the question mark, the dash, lower case letters, gothic and bold prints, capitalization, small print, spacing, italics etc". In other words, it deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence. Within these levels there is an important field of stylistic analysis; FOREGROUNDING.

The concept of foregrounding is a major characteristic of stylistics, and is particularly useful in analysing poetry. Foregrounding is the core of stylistics and is thus described as "a form of textual patterning which is motivated for literary aesthetic purpose"(Simpson: 2007, p. 50). Simpson distinguishes between two types of foregrounding: firstly, by deviation from a norm and secondly, by imposing repetition or parallelism. Such deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms are referred to as foregrounding, which invokes the analogy of a figure seen against a background (Leech, 1969, p. 57). Deviation is of many kinds; lexical, grammatical, phonological, historical, graphological, semantic and others (Leech and Short: 2007).

### Elements in stylistic analysis

The elements of the levels of analysis are briefly discussed below.

**Graphological Devices** include, **Punctuation:** punctuation marks are used in writing. They divide sentences and phrases. Punctuation is the system of using the punctuation marks. These marks include full stop, comma, colon, semicolon, question mark, exclamation mark, apostrophe, hyphen, ellipsis, quotation marks, parentheses, brackets, etc. **Paragraphing:** a paragraph is a separate part which contains information, usually of several lines or sentences. The first sentence of a paragraph starts on a new line.

**Phonological devices:** Phonological devices include. **Rhyme elements;** which consist patterns of rhymes, the stressed pattern and the rhyming scheme which are followed in the poetry. **Alliteration,** refers to the use of same letters or sounds at the beginning of words that are close together. It was used systematically in Old English poetry but in Modern English poetry, it is generally used for a particular effect. **Consonance,** is a half rhyme in which final consonants are repeated but with different preceding vowels. **Assonance,** means the effect created when two syllables in words that are closed together have the same vowel sound but different consonants or the same consonants but different vowels. **Onomatopoeia,** refers to the effect produced when the words used contain similar sounds to the noises they describe: "murmuring of innumerable bees".

**Morphological devices: Among these devices are; Affixes,** the process of forming new words by putting morphemes before some words. It further divides into prefixes or suffixes. These are two popular types of morphological operations. Prefixes generally alter the meanings of the words and suffixes changes its part of speech. **Coinages:** This is the process of forming new words from the existing ones.

**Lexico-syntactic devices:** These include; **Anastrophe,** the inversion of the natural or usual word order'.

The use of anastrophe secures emphasis and focuses the readers' attention. **Parenthesis,** entails the insertion of some verbal unit (extra information, an afterthought or a comment) in a position that interrupts the

normal syntactical flow of the sentence'. **Ellipsis**, refers to the deliberate omission of a word or words, which are readily implied by the content: It is used to create brevity reemphasis or ambiguity'. **Asyndeton**, is the deliberate omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses. Asyndeton produces a hurried rhythm in the sentence. **Anaphora**, refers to the use of a word that refers to or replaces another word used earlier in the sentence. Finally, we have **Epizeuxis**, the repetition of a word or phrase without any breaks at all.

## METHODOLOGY

The study attempts to analyze cohesive devices in Ambanasom's poem 'Plastic Invasion'. The data for this study constitutes examples of cohesive devices drawn from Ambanasom's 'Plastic Invasion'. Stylistic analysis will be used to explore themes through different cohesive devices and vocabulary items to understand the poem. The study will examine how Abanasom presented the rich philosophy by using simple narrative language. In this poem, the poet style is based on certain criteria and techniques. The findings are both qualitative and quantitative owing to the nature of the study. The researcher employs the descriptive method in the classification of cohesion types utilize in the text.

### Theoretical Model of Analysis

This study draws heavily on Leech and short (1981) and Short (1996) model of analysis. The model is structured as follows:

It brings forthsome background material about the poet; gives a general understanding of the poem under analysis; demonstrates a linguistic stylistic analysis within the levels of: **a.** Lexical cohesion; which subsumes lexical relation and collocation, and **b.** Grammatical cohesion; which subsumes reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction and examines foregrounding within its key components; deviation and parallelism.

### The Poet Shadrach Ambanasom

Shadrach A. Ambanasom was born in Ngie Sub-Division in the North-West Region of Cameroon. He held the following academic diplomas: CAPCEG, from the University of Yaounde 1; BA in English (University of London); M.Ed; MA and PhD (Ohio University). He retired as Associate Professor from the English Department of HTTC, the University of Bamenda. This legendary writer, died on Friday August 28, 2020 after a prolonged illness.

The poem is about invasion by plastic products, littered everywhere, in the environment, causing pollution, bareness, with little space for the cultivation of crops. The poet enumerates various types of plastic products which are also visible in our homes.

### Stylistic Analysis within the Levels of Lexical and Grammatical Cohesion

#### Lexical cohesion

The researcher will attempt an analysis of lexical items that are cohesive and foregrounded in the poem. Lexical cohesion subsumes lexical relation and collocation.

In the first stanza, the invaded environment is depicted through the repetition of lexical items that describe the significant amount of plastic in the environment. Among the lexical items repeated several times are; 'plastic', repeated 17 times, 'polished', repeated 4 times, 'rubber', repeated 2 times etc. These lexical items repeated several times serve to provide a background for the overwhelming presence of invaded

plastic objects in the environment causing damage to the ecosystem (a community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.). Meanwhile, 'are there' 7 times, 'this', in stanza 3, line 3 and 4 'that', in stanza 3, line 3 and 4, 'here', in stanza 1 line 1, 'and' in stanza 2 line 1 and 2, 'there', is repeated 9 times in stanza 1, 'all', in stanza 1 line 3 and 4, stanza 2 line 3 and 4, stanza 3, line stanza 3 line 3 and six.

Lexical cohesion is again evident when adjectives examined share the same semantic content. The adjectives 'scarce', and 'decreasing', share the similar property associated with insufficient space for the cultivation of crops. On the other hand 'barren' and 'bare' portray the unproductive nature of the environment as a result of plastic invasion.

The fear experienced by the poet is imagery that depicts the barrenness of the environment. Foregrounding is achieved by some degree of deviation from the normal use of language. For instance, lexical and syntactic choices depart from the norms of ordinary language use. In this poem, Ambanasom uses 'polished', 'plastic', and plasticized, as adjectives in inappropriate context to modify the abstract nouns personalities, smiles and world respectively. In these deviations, the adjectives lie outside the normal range of choices. This demonstrates the overwhelming presence of invaded plastic products in our environment, our homes, and our nature.

Ambanasom highlights another deviation which comes from his use of metaphor. He describes the world as barren; "Barrenness, oh yes; all is bare". It is possible that the poet's foregrounding is meant to stress that the world has lost its fertility as a result of the presence of the noun 'barrenness', an expression typically used for human beings who cannot produce children. This means that the soil is no longer fertile for crop cultivation as a result of its pollution by plastic debris. By describing the world as barren, Ambanasom shows that the presence of these plastic debris is so overwhelming that the land is losing its fertility. In fact, the invasion by plastic objects is so devastating to the extent that it has rendered the environment unproductive.

### **Grammatical Cohesion**

The poem is written in present tense. This poem 'Plastic Invasion' expresses an action that is occurring in the present time. That is, something happening at the time of speaking; or what is habitual. In the analysis of the structure of the clauses in the poem, the poet deliberately makes use of the present tense and the present participle of verbs to describe the invasion by plastic objects and its effect. For instance, the verb forms of 'to be', (is, are), and the forms wearing, feigning, and decreasing, in stanza 3, lines 2, 3, and 5 respectively, in the present participle, portray the catastrophic nature of the invasion and pollution by plastic wastes as continuing endlessly. Quirk and Greenbaum, (1973, p. 41), note that the simple present tense makes a poem ready to be read and referred to every time, since one of the main distinguished types of this tense is 'timeless' Thus, the poet depicts the destructive nature of the invasion as not coming to a logical end. Short (1996:23), further reiterates that, the present tense aids the specific but at the same time general aspect of the interpretation, as the present tense can be used to refer to the specific situation for a particular speaker and also to timeless, universal matters, such as plastic invasion or pollution. However, the presence of the present participle form of verbs is rather inconspicuous in the first two stanzas. This feeling of uncertainty instills fear and panic in the minds of those experiencing the catastrophe.

### **Parallelism**

Parallelism, or parallel structure, is when different phrases in a sentence have similar grammatical structure. In its basic usage, parallelism serves to provide phrases with clarity, pattern and rhythm. Kassis (1999, p. 243) explains 3 types of parallelism, which are: a. Synthetic parallelism; when the second line is the continuation of the first either by extending it or by explaining it. b. Antithetic parallelism; when the second

part of the saying negates the first or conveys its opposite. c. Synonymous parallelism; in this form the second part of the saying makes the first emphatic by stating similar thought in different words.

The poem 'Plastic Invasion' is rich in both synthetic and synonymous parallelism. Synonymous parallelism can be easily traced in stanza 2 and 3 of the poem. In stanza 2, lines 3, 'Plastic this, plastic that – all is plastic', and 4 'Polished this, polished that – all is polished', express similar thoughts. Similarly, in stanza 3 of the poem, we have line 5 'with decreasing fields of fertility' and 6 'Barrenness, oh yes; all is bare' which are also synonymous in meaning. Synthetic parallelism on the other hand, is most evident in stanza 1, in which line 2, is an extension or the continuation of line 1. In the same stanza, lines 4 to 10, is an illustration or explanation of line 3; 'A searchlight, right in our homes, reveals all:' Thus, lines 4 to 10 enumerate a variety of plastic objects found in our homes.

### Phonological Cohesion

In order to analyze the full effect of the catastrophic invasion, Ambanasom structures his poem by internal sound patterns in the form of alliteration; which is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of two or more words. In stanza three, line 15, the voiceless plosive /p/ is repeated at the initial position of the words 'polished and personalities', in line 20, the voiced plosive /b/ is repeated in 'barrenness', and 'barre' etc. The alliteration of the voiced plosive /b/ is also evident in stanza 1, line 10 in the words 'bags', and 'basket'. The devastating state of the invasion is reinforced by the presence of these ear-piercing plosives like /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, in words like 'plastic' /plæstɪk/, 'barrenness' /'bærənnəs/, 'too' /tu:/, 'decreasing' /dɪkriːsɪŋ/ and 'grand' /grænd/. The alliteration creates a dramatic situation as plosive are often used for this purpose..

The same effect is created in stanza one, two and three using this technique. The poet uses these sounds to convey the destructive nature of the invaded plastic objects to the environment and to mankind. Alliteration makes the effect more powerful as it establishes a link between these words. Not only are these words linked by the quality of the sounds, but they create a vivid impression of the destructive nature of the invasion by plastic objects. Hence, this patterning has a cohesive function; linking words together at the level of sound. This reinforces the semantic inter- relationships among these words.

### Consonance

When the final consonant sounds give the same sound, it is referred to as consonance. 'Everywhere, with scarce a spot for a plant' (line 2), 'A searchlight, right in our homes, reveals all:' (line 3), 'plastic chairs and plastic beds are all there' (line 4). In these lines of the poem, Ambanasom makes use of final consonant sounds that are the same. The poet makes use of consonance to provide the poem with a rhyming effect. Consonance adds to its sing-song quality. This tool is employed for the purpose of reiterating the overwhelming presence of plastic products in the environment. This creates a background for the theme of pollution and barrenness. Ambanasom's use of consonance also makes the structure of the poem appealing to the reader. This use of this device is an attempt to underscore the emotions behind his words that simple words cannot convey.

### Hyperbole

Above all, the poet in 'Plastic Invasion' makes use of hyperbole. Hyperbole is when language is used to exaggerate or emphasize a point. That is the exaggeration of detail to render truth. Examples of hyperbole in the poem 'Plastic Invasion' can be seen in lines 18; 'So ours is now one grand plasticized world' and 20; 'Barrenness, oh yes; all is bare.' The use of hyperbole emphasizes the devastating nature of the invasion, to grab a reader's attention. This evokes a response from the reader. Hyperbole helps Ambanasom to get his point across so that the reader understand the emotion, or seriousness of this situation.

## CONCLUSION

Anyhow, the poet Ambanasom succeeds to portray the destructive nature the plastic objects by the patterns of cohesion and foregrounding. Here, the poet draws the readers' attention to the endless process of plastic invasion through the description of the negative effect of this pollutant via cohesion patterns. In 'Plastic Invasion', Ambanasom evokes the reality faced by the environment and our homes littered with this invaded pollutant by conjuring an image of destruction and barrenness. The poet has managed to portray the ugly side of this waste product in its brutality in the poem. The stylistic characteristics of cohesion used by the poet Ambanasom in his poem 'Plastic Invasion' portrays his style and ideology. Ambanasom succeeds to portray the disastrous image of plastic invasion by the patterns of cohesion and foregrounding.

The choice of words used by the writer or the poet plays a significant role in meaning making. It helps the reader or the hearer to understand the intention and the message the poet is trying to pass across. This stylistics, analysis has shown that there is a distinction between poetic and non-poetic language as a means of defining literature, language used or manipulated in ways that differ from 'ordinary' language.

## BIO-DATA

Comfort Numfor holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in English Language; a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Applied Linguistics & a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in Applied Linguistics from the University of Buea in Cameroon. She is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Modern Letters; Higher Teacher Training College Bambili, the University of Bamenda. At present, she teaches applied linguistic courses. She has published extensively in the area of applied Linguistics. Contact: 677494992; email: nnumforcomfort@yahoo.com

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## APPENDIX

### “Plastic Invasion”

1. Plastic here, plastic there, there is plastic everywhere, with scarce a spot for a plant.

A searchlight, right in our homes, reveals all:

plastic chairs and plastic beds are all there;

plastic bottles and plastic spoons are there;

rubber buckets and rubber plates are there;

plastic tables and plastic gloves are there;

rubber guns and rubber basins are there;

plastic carpets and plastic stools are there;

plastic bags and plastic baskets are there.

2. Here is invasion by plastic objects.

Here is our plastic civilization.

Plastic this, plastic that – all is plastic.

Polished this, polished that – all is polished.

3. We are polished personalities too,

wearing plastic smiles wherever we go,

feigning politeness to all those we meet.

So ours is now one grand plasticized world,

with decreasing fields of fertility.

Barrenness, oh yes; all is bare.

Ambanasom Shadrach, Cameroon (2017)